COPY

ANNEX 9

116(m)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
INCOMING TELEGRAM

TOP SECRET

Rec'd September 1, 1947
6:49 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY WOLF JR DATE 5/25/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
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FROM: London

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 4743, September 1, 10 p.m.

US URGENT

FOR LOVETT FROM DOUGLAS

REDEPTEL 3799.

1. I informed Bevin this afternoon we could not accept the uncompromising position of the UK Government in regard to the date of withdrawal of troops from Greece.

2. Bevin replied that he understood we were disturbed but that there were three considerations which made his government most anxious to remove British troops from the area.

(A) Mr. Byrnes had been informed over a year ago that the purpose which the British Government had in mind when the troops were first sent to Greece had been accomplished and that he could not keep the troops there interminably. Mr. Marshall had been informed at the Moscow Conference that it was the intention of the British Government to withdraw the troops during the fall of this year. We had, therefore, been given ample notice.

(B) He had been having a great deal of trouble within his own party over retaining the troops in Greece as long as they had been retained and he was under great pressure to withdraw them. This pressure he could not, he thought, any longer resist. "Suppose", he said, "one soldier were killed and trouble between ourselves and the Soviet were thereby precipitated--I would be in an untenable position in England".

(C) One of the important influences was the fact that the policy of our government in the Middle East was unknown to his government. It was not known, for example, what our attitude in regard to the disposition of Cyrenaica might be.

Herschel Johnson's apparent objection to a treaty of mutual assistance between the UK and Egyptian Government was most

disturbing./

disturbing.

As to Palestine, the report of the committee of the UN Security Council raised most serious questions in regard to which the attitude of our government was unknown.

3. I replied as to Bevin's first point (A), that while it was true he had informed Secretary Marshall in Moscow the British forces in Greece would be withdrawn during the autumn of this year, the conditions during the intervening period had changed and were much more charged with difficulties now than they were then, that the action contemplated at that time ought to be reviewed in the light of circumstances as they are today.

As to Mr. Bevin's second point (B), I said I appreciated the political pressure within his party which was apparently influencing him. I hoped that he would not yield on the matter of such great significance, solely because of an internal political consideration. The withdrawal of the troops could, I believed, have no financial results sufficient to justify the serious consequences that might result.

I took it upon myself to say that the suggestion that the Greek Army be increased was no substitution for the British troops. We were convinced that the Soviet was not prepared to commit any overt act against a major power, but that it might not be reluctant to encourage the guerrillas to commit overt acts against a minor power. Accordingly, the withdrawal of British troops might precipitate exactly what Mr. Bevin sought to avoid.

Finally, I pointed out that British troops in Greece were symbolic of US-UK joint responsibility--this was the real significance of retaining them there, and that to withdraw them under the existing circumstances would be interpreted as an abandonment of the joint responsibility at a very critical time, with probable repercussion throughout other parts of Europe.

4. At last, Bevin said that he must repeat that his colleagues were very anxious to withdraw the troops but that he would not now give me a definite answer.

He put forward as a purely personal suggestion the following:

That/

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-3-#4743, September 1, 10 p.m., from London.

That we jointly review the whole position in the Middle East, including Cyrenaica, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq and Persia, for the purpose of arriving at a "gentlemen's understanding" in regard to a common policy and joint responsibility throughout the area, with the British acting as the front and ourselves supplying the moral support. He said he may put this to his cabinet but inferred that he would like to have our views to the above personal suggestion before doing so. I would appreciate your advice so that I may pass it on to Bevin.

DOUGLAS

DES:JSP